

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

EUR-25 IO-12 DPW-01 AID-20 RSR-01 /140 W

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R 160401 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 190

USDEL JEC PARIO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 6391

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: MR 3 WEEKLY SITREP - APRIL 9 TO APRIL 15, 1973

FOL TEL SENT SAIGON FROM BIEN HOA APR 15, 1973 RPTD FOR YOUR INFO:
QUOTE BIEN HOA 73

1. DURING THE SECOND WEEK OF APRIL, THE NVA/ VC MILITARY PRESSURE ON THE ARVN RANGER BASE CAMP AT TON LE CHAM CONTINUED, THOUGH, AT A LOWER LEVEL OF VIOLENCE THAN THE PREVIOUS WEEK. ELSEWHERE IN MR 3, MILITARY ACTIVITY BY THE BELLIGERENTS LIKewise SHOWED A DECREASE. THE EXPECTED NVA/ VC DIVISION- SIZE ATTACK ON PHUOC BINH AND SONG BE TOWNS IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE THAT THE PROVINCE

CHIEF WAS PREDICTING FOR APRIL 10-15 FAILED TO MATERIALIZE BY THE WEEKEND. THE TWO RANGER BATTALIONS SENT BY MR 3 CG LTG NGUYEN VAN MINH TO REINFORCE PHUOC LONG' S DEFENSES MAY HAVE HELPED TO FORESTALL THE ATTACK. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT LAST WEEK' S NVA/ VC SHELLINGS AND GROUND PROBES MAY HAVE BEEN A FEINT INTENDED TO GET RVNAF PULLED OUT OF BINH DUONG PROVINCE. THIS GIVES THE NVA/ VC MORE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN THE IMPORTANT SAIGON RIVER CORRIDOR, KEEPS THE RVNAF ON THE DEFENSIVE AND OUT OF NVA/ VC- CONTROLLED TERRITORY, AND MAKES ANY POTENTIAL RELIEF OPERATION OF TON LE CHAM THAT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.

2. NO ONE IN MR 3, NEITHER VIETNAMESE NOR AMERICANS, CAN SAY WITH
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ANY DEGREE OF CERTAINTY JUST WHAT THE NVA/ VC INTENTIONS ARE RIGHT NOW. MOST INFORMED SOURCES SEEM TO AGREE THAT THE NVA/ VC HOPE TO DRIVE THE RANGERS OUT OF TON LE CHAM WITHOUT HAVING TO COMMIT AN OBVIOUS CEASE- FIRE VIOLATION BY OVERRUNNING THE CAMP. LTG MINH AND THE CAMP COMMANDER ARE DETERMINED NOT TO LET THIS HAPPEN, HOWEVER. PEOPLE DIFFER WHEN DISCUSSING PHUOC LONG PROVINCE. ON THE ONE HAND, WE HAVE INTELLIGENCE THAT THE PRG WANTS TO SET UP A " LIBERATED" PROVINCE AS THE CAPITAL OF THE PRG, THAT THE NVA/ VC PLAN TO WIN CONTROL OF PHUOC BINH DISTRICT, AND THAT THEY HAVE TOLD VILLAGERS THAT NATIONAL HIGHWAY HIGHWAY 14 (THE

LIFELINE TO PHUOC BINH AND SONG BE TOWNS) WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS (PRESUMABLY IN AN EFFORT TO STARVE THE TOWNS' DEFENDERS). ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NVA/ VC ALREADY CONTROL ALL OF LOC NINH AND TO DUC DISTRICTS, NEARLY ALL OF CHON THANH DISTRICT, AND MOST OF NORTHERN TAY NINH PROVINCE. THE PRG CAN ESTABLISH ITS CAPITAL IN LOC NINH RIGHT NOW IF IT SO DESIRES. WHY DOES IT NEED SONG BE? PERHAPS IT WANTS A PROVINCE RATHER THAN A DISTRICT SEAT FOR ITS CAPITAL. IF SO, IT WILL BE A COSTLY EFFORT, FOR LTG MINH IS UNDER ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT THIEU NOT TO GIVE UP ANY PROVINCE CAPITAL, AND MINH INTENDS TO FOLLOW THESE ORDERS.

3. PEOPLE ARE ALSO SPLIT ON THE PROSPECTS FOR AN NVA/ VC OFFENSIVE. LTG MINH BELIEVES THAT AN OFFENSIVE WILL TAKE PLACE SOMETIME BETWEEN MAY AND JULY. HIS OWN G-2 AND MOST AMERICANS, HOWEVER, DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AN ALL- OUT OFFENSIVE WILL OCCUR, BUT THAT CONTINUED MILITARY PRESSURE WILL BE EXERTED TO KEEP THE RVNAF ON THE DEFENSIVE AND OUT OF NVA/ VC- CONTROLLED TERRITORY. THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OUTBREAK OF LARGE- SCALE FIGHTING OVER TON LE CHAM SEEMS TO US TO BE MORE OF A POSSIBILITY THAN AN ALL- OUT NVA/ VC OFFENSIVE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

4. ON THE PEACE- KEEPING FRONT, THE PRG DELEGATION TO THE REGION V TPJMC HAS STILL NOT RETURNED FROM SAIGON. AN ICCS INVESTIGATION OF THE FIGHTING AROUND TON LE CHAM REMAINS STALLED IN SAIGON. ICCS REGION V ACTIVITY, HOWEVER, PICKED UP THIS WEEK DESPITE THE GROUNDING OF ALL ICCS HELICOPTERS DUE TO THE LATTER BEING FIRED ON IN MRS 1 AND 4. THE INCREASE IN ACTIVITY IS DUE TO THE AGGRESSIVE CANADIANS, WHO CONTINUE TO DO THEIR THING TO MAKE THE ICCS WORK AS IT WAS INTENDED. THUS THE ICCS REGIONAL TEAM AGREED TO CONDUCT SIX MORE INVESTIGATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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ALTHOUGH THE POLES VETOED FOUR OTHERS; THE POINT OF ENTRY TEAM FOR BIEN HOA AIRFIELD MOVED INTO ITS BILLETES ON THE AIRFIELD; AND AN EXCEPTION TO THE GROUNDING- OF- HELICOPTERS RULE WAS OBTAINED FROM SAIGON SO THAT THE AN LOC ICCS TEAM COULD BE RESUPPLIED ON APRIL 14. THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE WEEK WAS THE CANCELLATION OF THE SCHEDULED FIRST TRIP TO PHUOC LONG PROVINCE BY THE AN LOC TEAM (BECAUSE OF THE GROUNDING OF HELICOPTERS), AND THE INABILITY TO MOVE THE POINT OF ENTRY TEAM FOR XA MAT INTO ITS BILLETES (SAME REASON).

5. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, NEARLY ALL GRVN OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MAY AND JUNE IN MR 3. THIS WEEK WE HEARD THE FIRST PRIVATE VIETNAMESE EXPRESSIONS OF BELIEF THAT BY RUSHING TO CONDUCT SUCH VILLAGE ELECTIONS, THE GRVN WAS VIOLATING THE PARIS AGREEMENT, WHICH STATES IN ARTICLE 12 B THAT " THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD WILL ALSO DECIDE THE PROCEDURES AND MODALITIES OF SUCH LOCAL ELECTIONS AS THE TWO SOUTH VIETNAMESE PARTIES AGREE UPON." FEW VIETNAMESE DARE TO STATE SUCH VIEWS PUBLICLY, OF COURSE, AND SUCH VIEWS WILL NOT DETER THE GRVN FROM HOLDING THE ELECTIONS. PRESIDENT THIEU' S DEMOCRACY PARTY CONTINUES TO DOMINATE THE POLITICAL SCENE IN MR 3, AND ALL SIGNS POINT TO A DEMOCRACY PARTY LANDSLIDE IN MAY AND JUNE. WALKINSHAW
UNQUOTE BUNKER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: hilburpw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON06391
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS BUNKER
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730444/aaaaiipmr.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hilburpw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Dec-2001 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <07-Dec-2001 by hilburpw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 980121
Subject: MR 3 WEEKLY SITREP - APRIL 9 TO APRIL 15, 1973
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, VS
To: EA
STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005